

Senate Resolution No. 38

Introduced by Senator Alquist

Relative to Greek Independence Day.

WHEREAS, The celebration of Greek Independence Day on March 25th draws inspiration from one of the holiest days for Greek Orthodox Christians, the Annunciation of the Theotokos. This is the day that, according to Greek Orthodox teaching, the Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear a child. Bishop Germanos of Patras seized the opportunity by raising the banner of revolution, in an act of defiance against the Turks that marked the beginning of the War of Independence. Cries of “Zito H Ellas” and “Eleftheria H Thanatos” can still be heard today. These freedom fighters, or “klephtes,” as they were called, of Greece sacrificed much for their country. Kolokotronis, Nikitara, Karaiskakis, Bouboulina, and Mpotsaris are some of the heroes of the revolution; and

WHEREAS, The struggle for independence was supported abroad by intellectuals of the day. In addition to the Secret Society of Friends (“Filiki Etaeria”) and the Sacred Band (“Ieros Lohos”), prominent figures including Lord Byron of England, and Daniel Webster and Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe of the United States raised the interest level among Europeans and Americans, respectively; and

WHEREAS, After centuries of unsuccessful uprisings and failure of the Ottoman Empire to assimilate and convert the Greeks, the Greek War of Independence began in 1821 rising up against 400 years of occupation and oppression by the Ottoman Turks. The origin of the Turkish occupancy began in 1453 with the fall of Constantinople, currently referred to as Istanbul. All true and faithful Hellenes living in their occupied homeland reacted to the Turkish oppression and resisted the attempts to deprive the Greeks of their heritage, freedom, and religion. During the dark years of the Ottoman occupation, thousands were killed and tortured for attending church or teaching their children Greek culture, history, and language. It was the Greek

Orthodox Church that helped to retain their very identity by the institution of “Crypha Scholia” (Hidden Schools); and

WHEREAS, For eight years the fighting ensued, until 1829, when the Sultan Mahmud II, facing Russian troops at the gates of Constantinople, accepted Greek independence with the Treaty of Andrianople; and

WHEREAS, March 25, 2010, marks the 189th anniversary of the rebellion and the struggle of the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire; and

WHEREAS, The Greek War of Independence, also known as the Greek Revolution, was a successful war waged by Greeks from 1821 to 1831, inclusive, to win independence from the Ottoman Empire; and

WHEREAS, Greek Independence Day reminds us of the strong principles and bonds that the United States and Greece share, including commitment to the democratic ideals of justice and freedom; and

WHEREAS, The United States democratic system of government traces its earliest roots back to ancient Greece. The leaders of the American Revolution and the framers of the United States Constitution often drew inspiration from Athenian lawgivers and philosophers and called the Greek example to mind as they sought to build the new nation on the foundations of representative government and free political discourse. The Greeks of 1821 drew inspiration, in turn, from the ideals and institutions of the fledgling United States as they waged their own struggle for liberty. Today, a vibrant Greek democracy serves once again as an inspiration to its neighbors and the world; and

WHEREAS, Greece and America have stood together as friends and allies from the time America embraced modern Greece’s struggle for independence 189 years ago. Greeks and Americans share a love of freedom, liberty, and individual rights. The friendship between our two nations is based on mutual respect, a commitment to common goals, and the sharing of fundamental values. Ties of blood and kinship also unite us: the modern community of approximately three million Greek Americans has established a natural and enduring bridge between our nations. Today, we take special note of those citizens and thank them for their innumerable contributions to our nation’s cultural, economic, and political heritage; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2005 American Community Survey, released by the United States Census Bureau, there are roughly 130,000 people in the state who self-identify as Greek in origin, which is approximately 10 percent of the national total; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, the state exported \$123,000,000 in goods to Greece, while importing \$55,700,000 in goods from Greece during the same time period; and

WHEREAS, Since 1963, the official state motto has been the Greek word “Eureka.” This Greek word has been on the state seal since 1849. “Eureka” means “I have found it,” and refers to the discovery of gold in the state. Archimedes, the famed Greek mathematician, is said to have exclaimed “Eureka!” when, after long study, he discovered a method of determining the purity of gold; and

WHEREAS, Greek Americans have become an integral part of the state, and have made important contributions to mainstream American society; and

WHEREAS, Approximately three million Greek Americans have joined mainstream society and began to make significant contributions as Californians in the fields of finance, technology, law, medicine, education, sports, media, the arts, the military, and government, as well as in other areas; and

WHEREAS, As the Greek-American community, with a population of approximately three million, prepares for a new era and creates new history, we must take special note of those citizens and thank them for their innumerable contributions to our nation’s cultural, economic, and political heritage; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate recognizes March 25, 2010, as Greek Independence Day; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

Senate Resolution No. 38 read and adopted by the Senate March 11, 2010.

Attest: _____
Secretary of the Senate